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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The claims are as follows:

1. (Currently amended): A method of interconnecting a network infrastructure via a plurality of communication links comprising:
defining a link affinity grouping based on a plurality of criteria including throughput for round-robin scheduling and throughput for a next available link scheduling;
classifying the plurality of communication links according to a link affinity grouping;
enabling and disabling selective ones of the plurality of communication links according to the link affinity grouping; **[[and]]**
activating a particular link selected from among the enabled communication links using a selection process adapted to characteristics of the link affinity grouping;
analyzing performance of the enabled communication links individually and in aggregate; and
determining, based on the analysis, whether altering assignment of links of two link affinity groups will improve throughput of both groups.
2. (Canceled).
3. (Currently amended): The method according to ~~Claim 2~~ Claim 1 further comprising:
determining whether the aggregate performance has declined to below a predetermined limit.
4. (Original): The method according to Claim 3 further comprising:
generating an alert signal when the aggregate performance declines to below the predetermined limit.
5. (Currently amended): The method according to ~~Claim 2~~ Claim 1 further comprising:

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identifying an individual link wherein, based on the analysis, disabling of the identified link from the aggregate in the link affinity grouping will improve aggregate throughput.

6. (Original): The method according to Claim 5 further comprising: automatically disabling the identified link.

7. (Original): The method according to Claim 5 further comprising: recommending disabling of the identified link.

8. (Currently amended): The method according to ~~Claim 2~~ Claim 1 further comprising:
recommending, based on the analysis, appropriate individual links for inclusion into a link affinity grouping based on criteria selected from among a group consisting of:
potential throughput, link path security ratings, logical unit (LUN) group criticality ratings, potential throughput according to the link selection process, link cost, link availability, primary and secondary replication classification, inclusion or exclusion of multiple link affinity groups, inclusion of partial or full link affinity groups, and link direction.

9. (Canceled).

10. (Currently amended): The method according to ~~Claim 2~~ Claim 1 further comprising:
selecting a link for activation in a data replication operation comprising:
maintaining a list of available links;
including a link on the list when the link becomes available;
activating the next available link on the list;
sending information over the activated next available link;
receiving the sent information at a remote site; and
reordering the received information into a proper order at the remote site.

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11-13. (Canceled).

14. (Currently amended): A storage system comprising:
an interface capable of interconnecting a network infrastructure via a plurality of communication links, the plurality of communication links having a diversity of data-carrying capacity and performance; ~~[[and]]~~ a controller coupled to the interface that assigns the plurality of communication links into at least one link affinity group based on performance criteria including throughput for round-robin scheduling and throughput for a next available link scheduling, and that controls link selection based on link affinity group assignment;
the controller manages ordered asynchronous disk array replication by enabling and disabling selective ones of the plurality of communication links according to the link affinity grouping, and activating a particular link selected from among the enabled communication links using a selection process adapted to characteristics of the link affinity grouping; and
the controller determines, based on the analysis, whether altering assignment of links of two link affinity groups will improve throughput of both groups.

15. (Original): The storage system according to Claim 14 wherein: the controller analyzes performance of the enabled communication links individually and in aggregate.

16. (Original): The storage system according to Claim 15 wherein: the controller manages synchronous and unordered asynchronous disk array replication by communicating data over all available links in a round-robin order, determines whether the aggregate performance has declined to below a predetermined limit, and generates an alert message for performance declines below the limit.

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17. (Original): The storage system according to Claim 16 wherein:
the controller identifies individual links wherein, based on the analysis,
disabling of the identified link from the aggregate in the link affinity
grouping will improve aggregate throughput.

18. (Canceled).

19. (Currently amended): The storage system according to ~~Claim 18~~
Claim 14 wherein:
the controller selects a link for activation in a data replication operation by:
maintaining a list of available links;
including a link on the list when the link becomes available;
activating the next available link on the list;
sending information over the activated next available link;
receiving the sent information at a remote site; and
reordering the received information into a proper order at the remote
site.

20. (Currently amended): The storage system according to ~~Claim 18~~
Claim 14 wherein:
the controller determines whether the aggregate performance has declined
to below a predetermined limit, and generates an alert message for
performance declines below the limit.

21. (Currently amended): The storage system according to ~~Claim 18~~
Claim 14 wherein:
the controller determines appropriate individual links for inclusion into a link
affinity grouping based on criteria selected from among a group
consisting of: potential throughput, link path security ratings, logical
unit (LUN) group criticality ratings, potential throughput according to
the link selection process, link cost, link availability, primary and
secondary replication classification, inclusion or exclusion of multiple
link affinity groups, inclusion of partial or full link affinity groups, and
link direction.

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22. (Currently amended): The storage system according to ~~Claim 18~~
Claim 14 wherein:

the controller identifies individual links wherein, based on the analysis,
disabling of the identified link from the aggregate in the link affinity
grouping will improve aggregate throughput.

23. (Canceled).

24. (Original): The storage system according to Claim 15 wherein:
the controller manages disk array replication using a protocol converter by
communicating data over all available links in a round-robin order
over identical throughput links.

25. (Currently amended): An article of manufacture comprising:
a ~~tangible~~ controller usable storage medium having a computer readable
program code embodied therein for interconnecting a network
infrastructure via a plurality of communication links, the computer
readable program code further comprising:
a code causing the controller to define a link affinity grouping based
on a plurality of criteria including throughput for round-robin
scheduling and throughput for a next available link
scheduling;
a code causing the controller to classify the plurality of
communication links according to a link affinity grouping;
a code causing the controller to enable and disable selective ones
of the plurality of communication links according to the link
affinity grouping;
a code causing the controller to activate a particular link selected
from among the enabled communication links using a
selection process adapted to characteristics of the link affinity
grouping; and
a code causing the controller to analyze performance of the enabled
communication links individually and in aggregate;

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a code causing the controller to analyze performance of the enabled communication links individually and in aggregate; and
a code causing the controller to determine, based on the analysis, whether altering assignment of links of two link affinity groups will improve throughput of both groups.

26. (Previously presented): The article of manufacture according to Claim 25 further comprising:

a code causing the controller to determine, based on the analysis, appropriate individual links for inclusion into a link affinity grouping based on criteria selected from among a group consisting of: potential throughput, link path security ratings, logical unit (LUN) group criticality ratings, potential throughput according to the link selection process, link cost, link availability, primary and secondary replication classification, inclusion or exclusion of multiple link affinity groups, inclusion of partial or full link affinity groups, and link direction.

27. (Previously presented): The article of manufacture according to Claim 25 further comprising:

a code causing the controller to maintain a list of available links;
a code causing the controller to include a link on the list when the link becomes available;
a code causing the controller to activate the next available link on the list;
a code causing the controller to send information over the activated next available link;
a code causing the controller to receive the sent information at a remote site; and
a code causing the controller to reorder the received information into a proper order at the remote site.

28-30. (Canceled).

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31. (Previously presented): The method according to Claim 1 further comprising:

defining the link affinity grouping based on a plurality of criteria further including characteristics of link path security, link cost, and conditions of link availability.

32. (Currently amended): ~~The method according to Claim 31 further A~~
method of interconnecting a network infrastructure via a plurality of communication links comprising:

defining a link affinity grouping based on a plurality of criteria including throughput for round-robin scheduling and throughput for a next available link scheduling;

classifying the plurality of communication links according to a link affinity grouping;

enabling and disabling selective ones of the plurality of communication links according to the link affinity grouping;

activating a particular link selected from among the enabled communication links using a selection process adapted to characteristics of the link affinity grouping;

defining the link affinity grouping based on a plurality of criteria further including characteristics of link path security, link cost, and conditions of link availability; and

defining the link affinity grouping (LAG) based on a plurality of criteria further including classification as primary and secondary link groups for replication of a logical unit (LUN) group, classification into intra-LAG groups, classification into inter-LAG partial inclusion groups, classification into inter-LAG full inclusion groups, classification as outbound (failover) links, and classification as inbound (failback) links.

33. (Currently amended): The storage system according to Claim 14 further comprising:

the controller that assigns the plurality of communication link plurality links into at least one link affinity group based on performance criteria

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further including characteristics of link path security, link cost, and conditions of link availability.

34. (Currently amended): ~~The storage~~ A storage system according to Claim 14 further comprising:

an interface capable of interconnecting a network infrastructure via a plurality of communication links, the plurality of communication links having a diversity of data-carrying capacity and performance; and a controller coupled to the interface that assigns the plurality of communication links into at least one link affinity group based on performance criteria including throughput for round-robin scheduling and throughput for a next available link scheduling, and that controls link selection based on link affinity group assignment; and the controller that assigns the plurality of communication link-plurality links into at least one link affinity group based on performance criteria further including classification as primary and secondary link groups for replication of a logical unit (LUN) group, classification into intra-LAG groups, classification into inter-LAG partial inclusion groups, classification into inter-LAG full inclusion groups, classification as outbound (failover) links, and classification as inbound (failback) links.

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